



Deschutes Trails Coalition

E-Bike Community Conversation Findings Report

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Prepared for Deschutes
Trails Coalition
by Triangle Associates

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Executive Summary

Introduction

The Deschutes Trails Coalition convened a facilitated, community-wide conversation to share information and gather public feedback regarding the potential use of Class 1 pedal-assist electric bicycles on soft-surface non-motorized trails on the Deschutes National Forest in Central Oregon.

Currently, the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) does not allow e-bikes on Deschutes National Forest non-motorized trails. However, e-bikes could be allowed in the future after a U.S. Forest Service (USFS) -led assessment. The following report summarizes the input collected during multiple meetings that made up the community-wide conversation led by the Deschutes Trails Coalition.

Summary of Findings

The following is a list of themes identified through the community conversation relating to the potential use of Class 1 e-bikes on non-motorized trails on the Deschutes National Forest.

1. An **increasing volume of users** of all use types can, as indicated by many participants, affect user experience, safety, wildlife habitat, and create challenges for land managers and a need for additional trail maintenance. There are different perspectives regarding the degree to which allowing Class 1 e-bikes would further increase user volumes, and if allowing Class 1 e-bikes could exacerbate the aforementioned impacts.
2. **Access to and experiences of nature** was a common value for participants regardless of their perspective on the use of e-bikes. Participants shared a range of perspectives on how allowing Class 1 e-bikes would affect their experience in nature. Some participants indicated that Class 1 e-bikes enhance access to nature, particularly for those who are ageing, while others expressed concern that allowing Class 1 e-bikes would degrade their ability to experience nature in non-motorized areas.
3. **Safety** was of common interest of participants regardless of their perspective on an allowance for Class 1 e-bikes. Some participants expressed safety concerns for other users if Class 1 e-bikes were allowed on non-motorized trails. Other participants expressed interest in allowing Class 1 e-bikes on non-motorized trails to create a safer riding experience away from motorized roads.
4. **Managing for the future** use was identified as a consideration if Class 1 e-bikes were allowed, with participants observing that it maybe be hard to communicate and enforce the use of Class 1 e-bikes only and ensure other e-bike classes or e-devices do not take advantage of a potential allowance. There is often a lack of clarity around e-bike classifications and their distinctions, which may cause confusion and difficulty surrounding compliance and enforcement.
5. **Impact on wildlife and habitat** was identified as a consideration by conservation interests. Participants observed that all recreation use types can negatively impact wildlife and habitat connectivity.

About Deschutes Trails Coalition

Deschutes Trails Coalition is a coalition of over 35 diverse organizations and agencies representing public lands, outdoor recreation, conservation, tourism, businesses, and trail user groups. Deschutes Trails Coalition works collaboratively to foster an exceptional regional trail system that is sustainably managed and balances the needs of people and nature.

Chapter 1: Background on E-Bikes and E-Bike Policy

E-Bike Classes

Many jurisdictions, including the USFS recognize three distinct classes of e-bikes (see Table 1). The USFS defines all three classes of e-bikes as motorized. This findings report focuses on the potential use of Class 1 e-bikes on soft-surface trails on the USFS-managed Deschutes National Forest (DNF).

- Class 1, 2, and 3 e-bikes are prohibited on non-motorized trails and roads on all National Forests and Grasslands across the United States, including the DNF. The USFS currently designates e-bikes as motorized vehicles, which means e-bikes are only allowed on motorized trails and roads.
- National Forests may individually consider new opportunities for e-bike use on existing non-motorized trails and in non-motorized areas through a process involving environmental analysis, public involvement, Tribal Government-to-Government Consultation, and local decision-making. Currently, no non-motorized trails on the DNF have been assessed for e-bike use.

While the definition of “e-bike” varies across the United States, many jurisdictions define e-bikes as bicycles having electric motors of up to 750 watts (about 1 hp) and recognize three classes of e-bikes.

Class 1 e-bikes do not have a throttle and the pedal assist motor only engages when the user is pedaling. On Class 1 e-bikes, the pedal assist motor stops providing assistance when the bike reaches 20 miles per hour. DTC understands that most e-bikes designed for mountain bike trails are Class 1 e-bikes.

Table 1 E-Bike Classes

Class	Pedal Assist Only*	Throttle	Motor Stops Assistance At:
Class 1 e-bike	✓	No	20 mph
Class 2 e-bike	Motor can exclusively propel without pedaling, typically via throttle	✓	20 mph
Class 3 e-bike	✓	No	28 mph

* “Pedal assist only” means that the motor only provides assistance when the rider is pedaling.

Background on USFS Policy

In March 2022, the USFS issued direction that defines e-bikes of all classes as a motorized use, which means e-bikes are not allowed on non-motorized trails, such as those typically used by mountain bikers, and hikers (e.g., Phil’s Trail Complex and Peterson Ridge). The USFS direction gives local units, such as the Deschutes National Forest, discretion to identify where e-bike use could be allowed on existing non-motorized trails within that unit. To consider changing a trail designation to allow e-bike use, the USFS would need to perform an environmental analysis in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the USFS Travel Management Rule, which would include public engagement.

The community conversation on which this findings report is based was organized and led by Deschutes Trails Coalition and is not part of or related to any USFS process.

Existing Studies on E-Bike Effects

To date, there are a limited number of scientific studies on e-bike use on public lands that can inform management actions, and none are specific to Central Oregon.

One 2022 national study led by the U.S. Department of Transportation was the first national-scale effort to review existing information and assess opportunities and challenges regarding e-bike use (all classes) on public lands. A summary of key findings and unknowns is available online: [The Future of E-Bikes on Public Lands – Research Synopsis \(August 2022\)](#).

The Tahoe National Forest in California and the Allegheny National Forest in Pennsylvania have conducted locally specific environmental assessments of Class 1 e-bike use. These studies may be helpful resources for the Central Oregon trails community as local e-bike use is considered on the DNF. The studies are linked below:

- [\(“Tahoe National Forest Study”\) Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Decision \(FONSI\) for the East Zone Connectivity and Restoration Project](#). This assessment changed trail designation from “non-motorized to “motorized” to expand access for Class 1 e-bikes on 35 additional miles of trails.
- [Allegheny National Forest Class 1 E-Bike Environment Assessment](#)
This assessment is underway and proposes allowing Class 1 e-bikes on a local trail system.

Chapter 2: Summary of Community Engagement Methods

This chapter summarizes the Deschutes Trails Coalition and the independent facilitation team’s community conversation methods, outlining the approach to assessment interviews, roundtable meetings, and community town hall meetings.

Background

Deschutes Trails Coalition is a neutral party well situated to convene a community conversation about potential future use of Class 1 e-bikes on the Deschutes National Forest. Deschutes Trails Coalition does not have a position regarding e-bike use on the Deschutes National Forest and does not have the authority to make or change any USFS rule regarding public access to trails, including e-bike use. To implement the community engagement process and lead meetings as part of a broad community conversation, Deschutes Trails Coalition contracted Triangle Associates (Triangle), a neutral, third-party facilitation team.

Triangle was hired by Deschutes Trails Coalition to facilitate interviews, roundtable meetings, and community town hall meetings to conduct an assessment and collect input on the possibility of permitting Class 1 e-bike use on non-motorized trails in the Deschutes National Forest.

Assessment Interviews

In April 2023, Triangle conducted virtual assessment interviews with six community leaders representing a diverse range of interests identified by Deschutes Trails Coalition. These interviews were designed to collect input design of the community conversation and to understand key interests and concerns on the potential integration and management of e-bikes on the Deschutes National Forest system and its non-motorized trails.

Stakeholder assessment interviewees are listed below in Table 2.

Table 2 Stakeholder Assessment Interviewees

Organization Interviewed	Interest Group/Community Group
1. Visit Bend	Tourism
2. Deschutes Collaborative Forest Project	Conservation
3. Bend EMTB Access	E-bikes
4. Oregon Adaptive Sports	Adaptive Recreation
5. Central Oregon Trails Alliance	Mountain Bikes
6. Oregon Equestrian Trails	Equestrians

Roundtable Meetings

In May and June 2023, Deschutes Trails Coalition held two facilitated roundtable discussions, which included stakeholder representatives, USFS recreation staff, and Deschutes Trails Coalition staff. The purpose of holding two roundtable meetings was to provide community leaders with an opportunity to constructively share and learn from one another about a range of perspectives, questions, interests, and concerns regarding Class 1 e-bike use on the Deschutes National Forest, identify areas of shared interest, and help set up a constructive dialogue with the broader community. Roundtable participants included representatives from the six interest groups interviewed as part of the assessment interviews,

one representative from Central Oregon Running Club and one representative from Sunnyside Sports (retail).

At the first roundtable meeting, participants built a collaborative atmosphere, established a common understanding of each user interest, and began a dialogue about potential use of Class 1 e-bikes on the Deschutes National Forest. At the second roundtable meeting, participants explored potential scenarios regarding the use of Class 1 e-bikes on existing non-motorized trails, considered the scenarios from different perspectives, and discussed a range of ways that partners and the Deschutes National Forest could move forward collaboratively on the issue.

Community Town Halls

In July and August 2023, Deschutes Trails Coalition hosted two public town hall meetings. The first was an in-person session held in Bend, Oregon, and the second was a virtual session held via Zoom.

The purpose of convening two town hall meetings was to provide information on current USFS e-bike policy, create space for participants to share and learn about the range of perspectives, interests, questions, and concerns about e-bike use in their community, and to collect community input to share with the USFS and the public on the potential for e-bike use on non-motorized trails on the Deschutes National Forest.

Chapter 3: Findings Report – Main Themes

This chapter reports on the findings of the community conversation in a thematic manner, encompassing assessment interviews, roundtable meetings, and town hall meetings. The facilitation team compiled feedback received from stakeholders and meeting participants and organized it both thematically and through descriptions of hypothetical scenarios regarding the potential allowance of Class 1 e-bikes on Deschutes National Forest non-motorized trails.

Shared Values and Experiences on the Deschutes National Forest

Throughout the community engagement process, stakeholders were asked to consider and share what they value about recreation and access to the Deschutes National Forest. Participants shared the following:

- The respectful, engaged, collaborative outdoor community
- Diversity of recreation opportunities on trail
- Ease of access to trails
- Healing quality of the forest, physically and mentally
- Opportunity to view wildlife and enjoy natural landscapes, ecosystems, and biodiversity
- Opportunity for solitude, peace, quiet, serenity, and tranquility
- Trail connectivity
- Sense of safety on trails
- Well-maintained trails
- Access to a pristine environment
- Access to trails and natural areas for people with mobility challenges
- Network of trails for equestrians
- Culture of courtesy and protection of sense of place
- Opportunity to recreate with family and friends
- Ability to maintain a healthy lifestyle
- Access to exercise and fresh air
- Flexibility of length and time on trails
- Diversity of beginner, intermediate, and advanced trails creates opportunities for all
- Sense of home and generational experience
- Trails and recreation access provide economic opportunities for Central Oregon
- Access to wildlife for conservation and hunting

Increasing Volume of Users

Participants expressed broad concern about an increasing volume of all types of recreation users on trails. They discussed and offered varying perspectives regarding the degree to which allowing Class 1 e-bikes could increase the volume of total users or be inclusive of existing users transitioning from a different trail use (e.g., traditional biker transitioning to e-biker). There was also concern that allowing e-bikes on trails could exacerbate challenges related to increasing user volume, and could increase impacts to user safety, wildlife, trail quality, user experiences, and trail maintenance costs. Participants offered personal anecdotes supporting different perspectives, with some indicating that scientific data would be helpful to inform the conversation. Several additional considerations arose relating to increased user volume (e.g., trail etiquette and education, and user conflict and displacement), which are discussed in depth in the sections below.

Participants discussed potential opportunities related to an increase in user volume, including the opportunity to increase educational efforts about trail etiquette and safety, opportunities to shift social paradigms to adjust to growth, and potential economic growth creation for the Bend community and the Central Oregon community.

Suggestions to address an increased volume of users included expanding the network of OHV trails, creating new trails designated for e-bike use, creating directional trails, and developing mandatory e-bike safety and trail etiquette trainings for e-bike rentals and/or purchases. Some participants also suggested considering how e-bike access would affect trail use during winter/snowy months.

Access to and Experience of Nature

Access to and experience of nature was a common theme and value for most participants regardless of their perspective on the use of Class 1 e-bikes on non-motorized trails. Participants shared a range of perspectives regarding how allowing Class 1 e-bikes would affect their experience in nature.

Some participants shared that Class 1 e-bikes enable them to ride trails that they would not otherwise be able to ride, providing nature and outdoor exercise experiences. Some of these participants specifically highlighted the benefits of e-bikes for people who may be aging and are experiencing physical limitations relative to when they were younger, and that e-bikes extend their ability to experience nature, trails, and outdoor exercise.

Participants indicated they value experiences in nature and outdoor exercise away from motorized-use and development. It was noted that there are a limited number of wilderness areas (where bikes of any kind are not allowed) and non-motorized areas and indicated that they value those places specifically because of their wilderness/non-motorized character. Some of those participants highlighted that they value traveling to places in national forests that can only be accessed under human power (e.g., no motor). These participants expressed concern that allowing e-bikes is counter to the spirit of a non-motorized landscapes and would change the user experience of those places. Some participants expressed an interest in finding quality places for e-bikers to ride away from existing non-motorized areas.

Speed, Safety, and User Conflict

Participants expressed concern about the potential for trail user conflict and the need for shared trail etiquette on multi-use and/or single-track trails, particularly between analog bikers, e-bikers, hikers, and equestrians. Safety concerns were a common theme among participants, regardless of their perspective regarding use of Class 1 e-bikes. Some participants observed a hierarchical nature of user conflict and safety concerns on the trails caused by speed differentials between users. Namely, that the bigger, heavier, and faster the use, the more concerning it could be to users engaging in activities that are relatively slower.

Participants shared concerns about the safety risks to all users when analog bikers and e-bikers travel at higher speeds than hikers and equestrians on the same trails. It was observed that the speed differential between e-bikes and analogue bikes is dependent on the rider, but it is relatively small compared to the speed differential between either type of bikers and equestrians or hikers.

Other concerns shared include:

- Some equestrians specifically highlighted safety concern when any type of biker (e-biker or traditional biker) is travelling at high speeds and approach too quietly for a horse or its rider to hear.
- Concern that access for e-bikers might increase users interested in high speeds/extreme uses without practicing responsible recreation.
- Concern about lack of enforcement capacity by the USFS.

Other safety and etiquette considerations included:

- Some e-bikers indicated they are interested in an opportunity to ride on trails away from motor vehicles (e.g., cars) that are larger and travel at faster speeds than e-bikes.
- Bad actors exist in all user groups. Some participants indicated use policies should focus on managing bad actors across uses while others suggested policies should not be developed based on outliers (e.g., bad actors).

Suggestions to address concerns regarding speed, user conflict, and trail etiquette included:

- Enforce a speed limit for all users as a safety measure.
- Create educational materials or opportunities on trail etiquette at the point of sale or rental.
- Move away from multi-use trails.
- Make currently allowed motorized trails more attractive to e-bikers.

Conservation, Wildlife, and Habitat Concerns

Participants expressed concerns about the potential for e-bikes to have environmental impacts including erosion, wildlife displacement, and habitat fragmentation. At the roundtable, conservation interests shared in detail that it is well established in the scientific literature that all recreation uses can displace wildlife and fragment habitat.

Conservation interests expressed concern that allowing e-bikes could lead to an increase in overall recreation use and subsequently, an increase in wildlife displacement and habitat fragmentation. It was suggested that e-bikes facilitate riders' ability to travel further and for longer periods of time, increasing the total volume of use in remote areas, and further impacting wildlife.

Conservation interests cited studies indicating louder and faster recreation uses have greater impacts on ungulates (e.g., deer and elk). There was concern that e-bikes may be faster than traditional bikes, and therefore have a greater impact on ungulates. Others indicated the speed differential between Class 1 e-bikes and traditional bikes is minimal and is highly dependent on the rider.

Participants also shared that in general an increase in recreation access and use could lead to an increased interest and advocacy for public land preservation and conservation.

A small number of participants also asked questions about the potential for e-bikes' batteries to be a wildfire concern. These participants suggested this seems unlikely but observed that lithium-ion batteries have been known to start fires in other settings.

Trail Quality and Maintenance

Participants shared concern about trail degradation as a result of potential increased volume, speed, and mileage of trail users, if Class 1 e-bikes were permitted in the Deschutes National Forest. It was also

noted that increasing volumes of use by other user groups can affect trail quality and maintenance needs.

While some shared that the soil composition in the central Oregon region is resistant to a lot of use compared to other areas of the country, others shared that Bend trails are showing significant degradation from the current volume of use, particularly on popular trails such as Tiddlywinks, Lower Tyler's Traverse, Phil's Canyon, and Ticket to Ride Canyon.

Other concerns about trail degradation include:

- Lack of capacity for trail maintenance if there was increased trail degradation because of e-bike use on soft-surface trails.
- Increase in trail damage due to the increased weight of e-bikes and the increased likelihood of unskilled riders on trails with e-bike use.
- If multi-use trails are open to e-bikes, there may be increased potential for the widening of trails due to e-bikes going around hikers or other trail users.
- The narrow tires of gravel bikes are a major new cause of trail degradation.

Some participants indicated that studies from other locations in the country show that Class 1 e-bikes have a relatively similar impact on trail tread when compared to traditional bikes. Others indicated it would be helpful to evaluate these questions in Central Oregon, specifically.

Managing for Future Uses

Some participants clarified they have an interest in ensuring the policy for allowing Class 1 e-bikes on a non-motorized trail is crafted in consideration of other potential e-devices. One concern that several participants voiced was that of the "slippery slope": If only Class 1 e-bikes were to be allowed, what would prevent every other e-assist device user from taking their device (Classes 2 and Class 3 e-bikes, one-wheels, motorized dirt bikes, etc.) on those trails as well. Several participants indicated public communications may be important to any policy.

E-Bike management challenges that were identified included increased recreation and demand overall, advancing e-bike technology, limited enforcement capacity, difficulty differentiating between e-bike classes, and limited scientific information and data on impacts of e-bike use. Some participants observed the e-bike class system is confusing to the public and allowing only Class 1 could result in a policy that is hard to communicate and hard for the public to understand.

Access, Ability, and ADA Considerations

Throughout the community conversation, participants discussed the potential benefits of e-bikes for the adaptive recreation community, including people with a disability as defined under the Americans with Disability Act (ADA) and for people who are aging and/or have health conditions that do not qualify as an ADA disability but would otherwise limit their recreation on soft-surface trails.

Roundtable participants held a specific dialogue on ADA access and existing federal allowances for electric assist wheelchairs and mobility devices on federal lands.

- Roundtable participants spoke to their individual experiences with e-assist mobility devices and questions within the current e-bike use rules on the Deschutes National Forest that they thought could use clarification. One participant shared that his mobility device resembles a Class 2 e-bike but understands that e-assist mobility devices are not classified as e-bikes and are

allowed on non-motorized trails, therefore it would be helpful for the USFS to clarify mobility device access.

- Deschutes National Forest representatives clarified USFS policy, following Department of Justice ADA guidance, that e-bikes are not e-assist mobility devices and is suitable for use in an indoor pedestrian area.” A wheelchair or mobility device “is designed solely for use by a mobility-impaired person for locomotion” and a wheelchair or mobility device under this definition is allowed anywhere foot travel is allowed, including on non-motorized trails. Participants identified an outstanding question about the potential use of e-bikes by a mobility impaired person for mobility assistance. Under current USFS regulations, e-bikes do not meet the above definition, are not considered a mobility device, and are currently not permitted on Deschutes National Forest non-motorized trails.

Roundtable members voiced broad support for the use of e-assist mobility devices for mobility-impaired individuals, with the understanding that e-assist mobility devices and wheels chairs are a different class of use than e-bikes.

USFS Mobility Device Policy

Given questions during the community conversation about USFS policy, Deschutes Trails Coalition is providing the following information as part of this report.

The USFS follows the definition of ‘wheelchairs or mobility devices’ of the Americans with Disabilities Act, Title V Section 508 (c). Under that definition and USFS policy, Adaptive mountain bikes (aMTB) are considered a mobility device when they:

- Are devices that are designed and manufactured solely for use by a mobility impaired person and are suitable for use in an indoor pedestrian area. When the above is true, aMTBs are allowed anywhere foot travel is allowed by a person whose disability requires use of a wheelchair or mobility device (Forest Service Manual 2353.05).
- May or may not have an electric/battery power source/motor.

In contrast to aMTBs, e-bikes (all classes and including mountain bike styles) are produced for the general public. E-bikes are not specifically designed and manufactured to meet the needs of a mobility impaired person. The 2nd component of the definition of a mobility device is that it is suitable for use in an indoor pedestrian area (i.e., grocery store, bank, restaurant). Therefore, e-bikes (or any other motorized device that does not meet the mobility device definition) are NOT currently permitted on non-motorized trails.

Questions

The facilitation team captured the following questions from participants at the roundtable and town hall meetings:

- Is it well-understood how much more use the trails and forest can handle in terms of capacity?
- Are the speed differentials between different user groups (e.g., equestrians, hikers, analog bikes, e-bikes, etc.) clearly defined or studied?
- To what degree would e-bikes increase the overall number of users relative to the number of existing users? If e-bikes were allowed, how many new users would the allowance and/or opening up a new e-bike rental market bring to the DNF relative to current users?

- Is Class 1 e-bike use being considered to be allowed on all non-motorized trails or just mountain bike trails, all of which are currently designated as non-motorized.
- Are Class 1 snow bikes included in the discussion?
- What is the current milage of OHV motorized trails on the DNF?
- Which trails can take more use and still meet sustainability?

Chapter 4: Scenario Discussion

This chapter describes participants' consideration of potential strengths and opportunities, as well as challenges and weaknesses that may exist if no, some, or all non-motorized trails were opened to e-bikes on the Deschutes National Forest. Participants were encouraged to consider the question from a range of perspectives, such as user experience, habitat and conservation needs, public communications, and implementation details in their responses.

Note that these are not definitive lists of all opportunities or challenges that exist for each scenario, but rather these are summary lists of what was shared during discussion periods during both townhalls.

A common theme that arose across all hypothetical scenarios was the importance of user behavior, social norms, and etiquette to safe user experiences on the trails. Identifying who the burden of trail etiquette communication and enforcement falls upon may be critical to consider.

Scenario: Status Quo (No Trails Open to Class 1 E-Bikes)

For the consideration of the status quo scenario, in which no trails open to Class 1 e-bikes, participants shared considerations regarding enforcement opportunities and challenges, user behavior challenges, and accessibility challenges. Participants also shared the following:

No Trails Open to Class 1 E-bikes (Status Quo)	
Strengths/Opportunities	Weaknesses/Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear policy makes it easy to comply and enforce • Fewer people on trails could mean less impact to habitat and wildlife • DNF has an extensive pre-existing network of USFS development roads, which are open to motorized travel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued social/user tension (status quo is not working locally) • Potential continued illegal e-bike use • Public communication • Could create enforcement challenges, user conflict, and peer policing • Etiquette challenges • Potential to decrease tourism/visitation in the Bend area • Less accessible • E-bike riders might ignore blanket bans • Loss of ridership, especially non-local riders, which could have economic consequences • Lack of capacity for enforcement

Scenario: Some Trails Open to Class 1 E-Bikes

For the consideration of a scenario in which some trails open to Class 1 e-bikes, participants brought up common themes of enforcement, education, and management challenges as well as strengths of compromise and solutions that could help inform future policy. Specifically, participants shared the following:

Some Trails Open to Class 1 E-Bikes	
Strengths/Opportunities	Weaknesses/Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider one-way (e.g. uphill only) trails • Defined boundaries may help with enforcement and help users understand where they can use e-bikes • Possible to reduce “social policing” and resulting conflict through defined trails network and boundaries • A “pilot program” could help explore the “social” question • Could provide equitable access to trails for more user groups • Possible to provide something for everyone on the trail system • Use trail “counters” to understand user volume • Potentially more users opting to ride loops or bike to trailheads versus taking shuttles or driving to trailheads • Opportunity for local access and tourism² • Opportunities offer a demo fleet of e-bikes for visitors • Consider only allowing Class 1 e-bikes on blue and green trails • Consider creating a “green”/easy loop for beginners • Be intentional about how impacts of e-bikes on trails are discussed • Open up a small section of trails to e-bikes first • E-bike access as a “equalizer” for riders of different abilities • Opportunity to designate areas for reduced use and wildlife support • Opportunity to learn from places with more e-bike users, such as Europe 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public communication, enforcement, and education • May be hard to predict how use volumes may increase • May be hard to monitor changes in use volume due to allowing e-bikes • Difficulty to determine which trails to open to e-bike use • Potential increase in user-to-user conflict • Increase users unfamiliar with how to control a bike on dirt (potentially leading to injury) • Trail etiquette for all users • Potential increase in the use of the trails and resulting wildlife disturbance and natural resource impacts • “Slippery slope” challenge of evolving e-bike technology

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity for compromise • Could be a starting point for assessment • East Madras Hills is a city-owned bike park and could be a good example of what could work 	
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Scenario: All Trails Open to Class 1 E-Bikes

For the discussion surrounding a scenario in which all trails were open to Class 1 e-bike use, participants shared themes surrounding clear communications, volume of users, conflict, education, and safety. Participants also shared the following:

All Trails Open to Class 1 E-bike Use	
Strengths/Opportunities	Weaknesses/Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear policy • Possible to learn from new rider experience and translate education to new e-bikers • More equitable access to the trail network • Rental/tourism opportunity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public communication • E-bikes may not be appropriate for the most difficult trails (too technical for the heavy e-bikes) • Crowded trailheads and trails ?? with more users • Increased user conflicts • Potential increase in the use of the trails and resulting wildlife disturbance and natural resource impacts • Trails with limited visibility pose risks to equestrians and horses; a blanket allowance on all trails could increase user conflict • Concern about increased volume and increased number of “bad actors” • Increase etiquette challenges and awareness, learning, expectations of different users

Chapter 5: Looking Forward

This chapter describes the next steps following the community engagement process. Throughout the Deschutes Trails Coalition-led community conversation, roundtable and town hall participants identified numerous questions regarding the possible effects of Class-1 e-bikes on non-motorized trails on the Deschutes National Forest. Participants suggested that next steps to be considered could include a pilot project, case studies, and/or an USFS-led environmental analysis compliant with NEPA.

At the roundtable meetings, the most robust discussion on paths forward focused the opportunities and limitations of a pilot project; however, that was an artifact of the roundtable agenda and should not be understood to mean there was more or less support for a pilot project relative to other proposed paths forward.

Case Studies

Some roundtable and town hall participants suggested one path forward could be to review case studies from other National Forests and/or public lands. It was noted that case studies may provide helpful information. Initial discussion included the following:

- Two National Forests have performed environmental analyses regarding Class 1 e-bikes.
- Central Oregon is a unique community and landscape and any information from other communities should consider the local context.
- Existing scientific studies, rather than a pilot project, may be better for understanding the effect of recreation and e-bike use on wildlife.

Environmental Analysis of Trails

Some roundtable and town hall participants suggested the USFS conduct an environmental analysis in compliance with NEPA and the USFS Travel Management Rule for a specific segment(s) of trails on the DNF. Some participants that identified as e-bikers proposed this as a priority next step.

Pilot Project

Some roundtable and town hall participants suggested one path forward could include a pilot project allowing Class 1 e-bike use on a specific trail or trail network on the DNF to help inform long term e-bike policy. Although there are currently no plans for a pilot project to study possible impacts of pedal assist, Class 1 e-bikes on the DNF, initial conversations discussed the following:

- If a pilot project were to take place, it may necessitate robust outreach and communication with the public and a very clear provision for sunseting the pilot.
- A pilot could seek to answer social, environmental, physical, and economic questions regarding e-bike impacts. Some participants suggested that a pilot study could focus primarily on answering social and cultural questions, while others suggested it could also consider environmental impacts specific to the DNF.
- Potential outcomes of a pilot project may include:
 - Answer questions about whether e-mountain bikes and analog mountain bikes are substantially similar or if they are different.
 - Test the public's ability to self-regulate and distinguish between classes.

- Potential complications/challenges of a pilot project may include:
 - Difficulty rolling back e-bike allowance, if needed. Are there examples?
 - Difficulty monitoring e-bike classes. Will people self-regulate?
 - Possibly limited utility for understanding impacts of e-bikes on wildlife.

For More Information

For more information about this community conversation, or to discuss this issue with Deschutes Trails Coalition, please contact Deschutes Trails Coalition Executive Director Jana Johnson (see contact information at the front of this report).

Appendix 1: DTC E-Bike Community Conversation Frequently Asked Questions Document

Deschutes Trails Coalition | E-Bike Community Conversation Frequently Asked Questions

Document Purpose: The Deschutes Trails Coalition (DTC) is convening a facilitated, community-wide conversation to collect input on the potential use of Class 1 electric-assist bicycles (e-bikes) on soft-surface trails on the Deschutes National Forest (Deschutes NF). This FAQ is provided by DTC to ensure the community is working with current information regarding e-bike use.

1. Who is DTC and why is DTC leading this community conversation?

DTC is a coalition of over 35 diverse organizations and agencies representing public lands, outdoor recreation, conservation, tourism, businesses, and trail user groups. Together we are working collaboratively to foster an exceptional regional trail system that is sustainably managed and balances the needs of people and nature. DTC does not have the authority to make or change any rule regarding public access to trails, including e-bike use.

DTC understands this is an important issue for many people living, visiting, and recreating in Central Oregon. DTC does not have a position regarding e-bike use on the Deschutes NF and is therefore well situated as a neutral party to convene this community conversation. DTC has contracted a neutral facilitation team to help lead community conversation meetings.

2. Can I ride my electric-assist bicycle (e-bike) on National Forest (NF) soft-surface, non-motorized trails?

No. Class 1, 2, and 3 e-bikes are prohibited on non-motorized trails and roads on NFs and Grasslands, including the Deschutes NF. The Forest Service currently designates them as motorized vehicles which means e-bikes are only allowed on motorized trails and roads.

However, there is a path to changing these rules. NFs may individually consider new opportunities for e-bike use on existing non-motorized trails and in non-motorized areas through a process involving environmental analysis, public involvement, and local decision-making. Currently, no non-motorized trails on the Deschutes NF have been assessed for e-bike use.

3. What is the purpose of this community conversation on class 1 e-bike use?

This DTC-led community conversation will focus on the Deschutes NF specifically and is intended to:

- a. Provide information to the public on USFS e-bike use policy.
- b. Create space for the community to constructively share and learn about a range of perspectives, interests, questions, and concerns regarding e-bike use.
- c. Collect community input to share with the USFS regarding the potential for e-bike use on non-motorized trails on the Deschutes NF.

The USFS has accepted DTC's invitation to observe the community meetings. DTC will share an informal summary report of community input that was shared and recorded at stakeholder roundtables and

community town halls with the public and USFS. It is important to note that the final report does not guarantee any specific USFS action.

4. How are e-bikes defined by class 1, class 2, and class 3?

The USFS defines all three classes of e-bikes as motorized vehicles. This community conversation is focused on the potential use of Class 1 e-bikes on soft-surface trails on the Deschutes NF, managed by the USFS. There are different definitions of “e-bikes” across the United States; many jurisdictions define e-bikes as having motors of less than 750 watts (about 1 hp) and recognize three classes of e-bike.

Class	Pedal Assist Only*	Throttle	Motor Stops Assistance At:
Class 1 e-bike	✓	No	20 mph
Class 2 e-bike	Motor can exclusively propel without pedaling, typically via throttle	✓	20 mph
Class 3 e-bike	✓	No	28 mph

* “Pedal assist only” means that the motor only provides assistance when the rider is pedaling.

More information about Class 1 E-bikes:

- Does not have a throttle.
- Provides assistance only while pedaling.
- Stops assisting when a speed of 20mph is reached.
- Is largely intended to augment human performance, resulting in outputs that are within or slightly exceeding the range of what is humanly possible (i.e. speeds and power attained by professional athletes)
- Commonly used and designed for trails on which traditional mountain bikes are used.

5. What studies have been done regarding class 1 e-bike use on non-motorized trails?

To date, there are a limited number of scientific studies on e-bike use on public lands that can inform management actions.

- One 2022 national study led by the U.S. Department of Transportation was the first national-scale effort to review existing information and assess opportunities & challenges regarding e-bike use (all classes) on public lands. See this [two pager’s](#) key findings and unknowns about all three e-bike classes.
- The Tahoe NF (CA)¹ and the Allegheny NF (PA)² have conducted locally specific environmental assessments of class 1 e-bikes that can be resources for the Central Oregon trails community as it considers e-bike use locally (see links below and on page 3).

¹ (“Tahoe NF Study”) [Decision Notice](#) and [Finding of No Significant Decision \(FONSI\) for the East Zone Connectivity and Restoration Project](#) – This assessment changed trail designation from “non-motorized” to “motorized” in order to expand access for class 1 e-bikes on 35 additional miles of trails. The Deschutes NF could conduct a similar assessment to evaluate class 1 e-bike use locally.

² [Allegheny NF Class 1 E-Bike Environment Assessment](#) – This assessment is underway and proposes allowing class 1-e-bikes on a local trail system.

This community conversation is intended to identify what is important to the Central Oregon community and identify outstanding questions that may need to be answered in the future.

6. What would it take to designate non-motorized trails for e-bike use?

To change the designation of non-motorized trails to allow e-bike use, the Deschutes NF would be required to perform a formal assessment, including National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis and further public involvement before final USFS decision-making. **This DTC-led community conversation is not part of any USFS process.**

7. Can e-bikes be defined as “non-motorized devices” like traditional (non-electric) bicycles?

No. The USFS defines e-bikes nationally as a class of motorized vehicles. The local Deschutes NF cannot change this definition. DTC understands that e-bike definitions can vary across jurisdictions. The scope of this community conversation is focused on the Deschutes NF and the USFS definition of e-bikes as motorized vehicles. See response to Question 2.

8. How do e-bikes differ from electric wheelchairs or other mobility devices?

DTC understands the USFS defines a wheelchair or mobility device as one “that is designed solely for use by a mobility-impaired person for locomotion, and that is suitable for use in an indoor pedestrian area.” Per the Americans with Disabilities Act, “designed solely for use by a mobility-impaired person” means that the device must have been designed and manufactured only for the purpose of mobility by a person who has a limitation on their ability to walk. A wheelchair or mobility device under this definition is allowed anywhere foot travel is allowed, including on non-motorized trails.³ E-bikes do not fit this definition and are not covered by Federal exceptions for the use of a wheelchair or mobility devices.

9. What are helpful sources for additional information?

A non-exhaustive list of additional information and case studies on e-bike use on public lands is provided below.

1. [U.S. Forest Service National E-bike Webpage](#)
2. [People for Bikes E-bike Website](#) – People for Bikes is a national advocacy group that promotes e-bike use on all types of trails and roadways. Their website includes information on e-bike policies in other states and class differences.
3. [U.S. Department of Transportation Future of E-bikes on Public Lands Research Study](#)
4. [Allegheny NF Class 1 E-Bike Environment Assessment](#)
5. [\(“Tahoe NF Study”\) Decision Notice](#) and [Finding of No Significant Decision \(FONSI\) for the East Zone Connectivity and Restoration Project; Tahoe NF and Humboldt-Toiyabe NF](#)
6. [Boulder County \(2019\) E-bike Pilot Study](#)
7. [E-bikes on Public Lands: A Survey of E-bike Users in Colorado; Colorado Mesa University \(2021\)](#)

³ Read about USFS regulations regarding wheelchairs/mobility device use here: [Law, Regulation and Policy governing Wheelchair Use \(usda.gov\)](#)

8. [A Comparison of Environmental Impacts from Mountain Bicycles, Class 1 Electric Mountain Bicycles, and Motorcycles: Soil Displacement and Erosion on Bike-Optimized Trails in a Western Oregon Forest; International Mountain Bicycling Association \(IMBA\) \(2015\)](#)

10. Who should I contact if I still have questions or want more information?

Please direct any questions to Jana Johnson, Executive Director at info@deschutetrailscoalition.org.

Appendix 2: DTC E-Bike Community Conversation Stakeholder Roundtable Meeting Summaries

Deschutes Trails Coalition (DTC) E-Bike Community Conversations Stakeholder Roundtable #1 Meeting

Meeting Summary

May 31, 2023 | 1:00 – 4:00 pm

Bend Public Library, Brooks Room

601 Wall St., Bend OR 97703

Attendance *(names listed in alphabetical order)*

Name	Affiliation
Pat Addabo	Oregon Adaptive Sports (OAS)
Justin Ewer	U.S. Forest Service (USFS)
Serena Gordon	Visit Bend
Jana Johnson	Deschutes Trails Coalition
Leslie Johnstone	Oregon Equestrian Trails
Max King	Central Oregon Running Klub (CORK)
Bill Lynch	Central Oregon Trails Alliance (COTA)
Lisa Machnik	U.S. Forest Service (USFS)
Kim McCarrel	Oregon Equestrian Trails
Don Miller	Bend eMTB Access
Julie Rugg	Bend eMTB Access
Mike Schindler	Sunnyside Sports
Kipp Wesslen	Oregon Adaptive Sports (OAS)
Facilitation Team	
Alyssa Bonini	Triangle Associates
Thomas Christian	Triangle Associates

Roundtable Purpose: The purpose of holding two roundtable meetings is to provide community leaders with an opportunity to constructively share and learn from one another about a range of perspectives, questions, interests, and concerns regarding class 1 e-bike use on the Deschutes National Forest (DNF), identify areas of shared interest, and help set up a constructive dialogue with the broader community.

Meeting #1 Purpose: The purpose of the first roundtable meeting was to build a collaborative atmosphere, establish a common understanding of each participants' interests, and begin dialogue about potential use of class 1 e-bikes on the DNF. Meeting #2 may focus on potential future scenarios or solutions that could meet multiple interests.

Opening and Background

Thomas Christian (Triangle) and Alyssa Bonini (Triangle) opened the meeting, welcomed Roundtable participants, and proposed ground rules. Roundtable members added several ground rules to the proposed list. These ground rules were agreed to by the group and are included in [Appendix A](#) of this summary.

Jana Johnson (DTC) welcomed participants and clarified that the purpose of holding community conversations about e-bike use on the DNF is to:

1. Provide common information on existing U.S. Forest Service (USFS) rules and the potential for e-bike use on the Deschutes NF.
2. Create space for the community to constructively share and learn about a range of perspectives, interests, questions, and concerns regarding e-bike use.
3. Collect community input to share with the USFS regarding the potential for e-bike use on the Deschutes NF.

Jana clarified that e-bikes have been classified as a motorized use nationally by the USFS and that local authorities (i.e., the Deschutes NF) can follow a formal local review process to designate existing non-motorized trails as allowable for e-bikes. The Deschutes Trails Coalition is convening the community conversation to facilitate constructive dialogue within Central Oregon, which is something a potential Deschutes NF review process would not be set up to do with the community. For more information, see in [Appendix B](#) of this summary.

Understanding Shared Experiences on the Deschutes National Forest

Roundtable participants were asked to think about how they value the Deschutes NF and its trails, and to share one word that described a “positive public lands experience.” The facilitator captured the following responses:

What do you Value about the DNF and its Trails?

- Home
- Community
- Multiple opportunities
- Engagement of trail community/community investment
- Quantity and quality of trails
- Explore the DNF/Woods
- Close access
- The forest is healing/physical and mental health
- Season transition

What is a "Positive Public Lands Experience" to you?

- Solitude
- Adventure
- Pristine
- Sweat
- Safe
- Health
- Exercise
- Natural
- Access
- Scenic-beauty
- Immersion

Report-Out on Assessment Interview Findings

In March 2023, the Facilitation Team conducted 1:1 assessment interviews with six roundtable members to learn about their interests, questions, and concerns regarding e-bike use on the Deschutes NF. The Facilitation Team shared results of those interviews with Roundtable participants, identifying areas where they had observed agreement, differing interests, and suggestions for how to craft a community conversation on the topic. Based on interviewee feedback, the Facilitator incorporated a mini-training on interest-based dialogue into the report out, providing tips on how to focus on and understand interests (why you want something or what you are trying to solve for), rather than only highlighting positions (what you want).

Presentation slides were sent to Roundtable members via email.

Update on the Status of E-bikes on the Deschutes National Forest

Jana provided an update on the current status of e-bikes on the Deschutes NF, and referred participants to a Frequently Asked Questions document that was provided before the meeting. Participants shared the following questions about the current status of e-bikes on the Deschutes NF and on the FAQ, which is included in [Appendix B](#) of this summary:

- Which (local) trails would be appropriate to change?
- How broad of a use change would be appropriate (i.e., no trails, some trails, or all trails)?
- How to communicate rules and norms surrounding e-bike use to the community?
- How to communicate the difference between Class 1 e-bikes and other classes to the average rider?

Facilitated Dialogue on Potential Class-1 E-Bike Use on the Deschutes National Forest

Roundtable participants were asked to share, personally and on behalf of the user group they represent, interests and potential concerns about class 1 e-bike use on the Deschutes National Forest.

Volume of Users and Potential Impacts

There was broad concern about increasing volumes of recreational use on trails, regardless of the use type (e.g., bikers, hikers, rider), with many noting this concern is not unique to the question about e-bike use. Woven throughout the group's discussion were shared concerns about whether allowing class-1 e-bikes on non-motorized trails would increase the volume of users on trails overall. Concerns were expressed about recreation use impacts on personal safety, wildlife, trail quality, user experiences, and on trail maintenance costs.

Speed and Safety Interests

Roundtable members identified they have an interest in a safe recreation experience, regardless of their primary use type.

Equestrian representatives indicated they are concerned with riding on single track trails with both analogue (non- e-assist) and e-bikes, specifically if the bikers are travelling at high speeds and approach too quietly for the horse or its rider to hear.

E-bikers indicated they are interested in an opportunity to ride on trails away from motor vehicles that are larger and traveling at faster speeds. Some participants observed a hierarchical nature of user conflict on the trails. Namely, that the bigger, heavier, and faster the activity, the more objectionable it could be to users engaging in activities that are relatively slower. Members observed that the speed differential between e-bikes and analogue bikes is dependent on the rider, but in general is relatively small compared to the speed differential between either type of bikes and equestrians/hikers.

It was suggested a speed limit could be enforced as a safety measure that would apply to all.

[Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\) Mobility Devices and Use of E-bikes for ADA Access](#)

Roundtable participants were curious about the rules surrounding e-assist mobility devices on the Deschutes NF non-motorized trails and voiced broad support for the use of e-assist mobility devices for mobility-impaired individuals. Kipp Wesslen (OAS) and Pat Addabo (OAS) spoke to their individual experiences with e-assist mobility devices and questions within the current e-bike use rules on the Deschutes NF that they thought could use clarification. Kipp shared that his mobility device resembles a Class 2 e-bike, but OAS understands that e-assist mobility devices are not classified as e-bikes and are allowed on non-motorized trails. OAS indicated it would be helpful for the USFS to clarify mobility device access.

Deschutes NF representatives clarified USFS policy, following Department of Justice ADA guidance, is e-bikes are not e-assist mobility devices. A wheelchair or mobility device “is designed solely for use by a mobility-impaired person for locomotion” and a wheelchair or mobility device under this definition is allowed anywhere foot travel is allowed, including on non-motorized trails. Roundtable members identified an outstanding question about the potential use of e-bikes by a mobility impaired person for mobility assistance.

[Managing for Future Uses](#)

Some roundtable members clarified they have an interest in ensuring the policy for allowing class 1 e-bikes on a non-motorized trail is crafted in consideration of other potential e-device. One concern that several participants voiced was that of the “slippery slope”: If only class 1 e-bikes were to be allowed, what would prevent every other e-assist device user from taking their device (classes 2&3 e-bikes, one-wheels, motorized dirt bikes, etc.) on those trails as well? Several roundtable members indicated public communications will be important to any policy.

[Gathering More Information](#)

Several participants expressed interest in supporting a pilot program allowing for class 1 e-bike use on a specific trail/network on the Deschutes NF to help better understand what might happen if e-bikes were allowed locally. It was suggested that if a pilot were to take place, it would necessitate robust outreach and communication with the public and a very clear provision for sunseting the pilot.

It was observed that there are case studies that can also provide helpful information. It was also noted that Central Oregon is a unique community and landscape and any information from other communities should consider the local context.

[List of Interests, Considerations, and Concerns](#)

Participants shared additional interests and concerns about the potential for opening up trails to class 1 e-bikes on the Deschutes NF, which are provided below:

Interests

- Ability to recreate safely
 - Disperse volume of users (perhaps by speed)
- To travel deeper into existing trail networks
- Clarify USFS policy on ADA access
- Broad education/outreach to community clarifying rules (which uses are allowed where) and norms (etiquette)
- Ubiquitous communications/signage throughout DNF

Concerns

- Environmental impact
- Speed - potential conflict between slower and faster users
- Impacts due to increased volume of use on trails:
 - Wildlife disturbance
 - Environmental impact
 - Cost for increased need for search and rescue
 - Increased maintenance
- Future technology advances
- Longevity of any rule created about this topic
- Trail use (etiquette)

Process Reflections

- Bend's location/terrain is unique and should not be compared to other locations/terrains for purposes of class 1 e-bike discussions
- Information-sharing would be helpful to ensure discussions are based on the same assumptions of fact about this topic

Wrap & Up and Next Steps

The Roundtable will reconvene at a virtual meeting on June 27 from 9:00-11:00am via Zoom. Proposed questions for participants to consider in the meantime are included below. The meeting was adjourned.

DRAFT Questions for Roundtable Meeting #2 Dialogue:

1. *Review notes / main themes from meeting #1 – reflect*
2. *Based on what you have heard from the group and on your experiences, what do you think land managers and partners should consider regarding the potential for e-bikes to be allowed on some existing soft surface non-motorized trails?*
3. *How would you recommend land managers meet as many interests as possible?*

**Deschutes Trails Coalition (DTC) E-Bike Community Conversations
Stakeholder Roundtable #2 Meeting
Meeting Summary**

June 27, 2023 | 9:00 – 11:00 am | Zoom Meeting

Attendance *(names listed in alphabetical order)*

Name	Affiliation
Pat Addabo	Oregon Adaptive Sports (OAS)
Justin Ewer	U.S. Forest Service (USFS)
Serena Gordon	Visit Bend
Jana Johnson	Deschutes Trails Coalition
Bill Lynch	Central Oregon Trails Alliance (COTA)
Lisa Machnik	U.S. Forest Service (USFS)
Kim McCarrel	Oregon Equestrian Trails
Erich Rhyll	Bend eMTB Access
Julie Rugg	Bend eMTB Access
Mike Schindler	Sunnyside Sports
Andrew Walch	Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW)
Facilitation Team	
Alyssa Bonini	Triangle Associates
Thomas Christian	Triangle Associates

Roundtable Purpose: To provide community leaders with an opportunity to share and learn from one another on a range of perspectives, questions, and concerns, identify where there are areas of shared interest, and help set up a constructive dialogue with the broader community regarding e-bike use on the Deschutes National Forest (DNF).

Meeting #2 Purpose: To explore potential scenarios regarding use of class 1 e-bikes on existing non-motorized trails, consider the scenarios from different perspectives, and discuss a range of ways that partners and the DNF could move forward collaboratively on the issue.

Opening and Background

Thomas Christian (Triangle) and Alyssa Bonini (Triangle) opened the meeting, welcomed Roundtable participants, and reviewed the agenda and ground rules. The ground rules are included in [Appendix A](#) of this summary. Thomas acknowledged a recent fatal traffic collision in Bend between a youth on an e-bike and a vehicle. He encouraged participants to make room for feelings that may arise during the meeting, since e-bikes will be discussed.

Jana Johnson (DTC) welcomed participants and shared a reminder that DTC is convening the community conversation to facilitate constructive dialogue within Central Oregon. The purpose of this meeting is to continue the conversation that participants began at the first Roundtable meeting on June 27, and to prepare for the community town hall meetings scheduled for July 27 and August 3.

DTC is working to set up a digital folder of online e-bike/trail resources and will share a link to the folder with the Roundtable group when it is ready.

Action Item: Jana will share a link to a digital folder of e-bike and trail resources with the Roundtable group when it is ready.

Reflections and Takeaways from Roundtable #1

Thomas asked participants to reflect upon what they learned during Roundtable #1 and to share questions. Jana shared it was affirming to hear from so many diverse user groups in one space at the last Roundtable meeting; a sentiment that was echoed by Roundtable participants.

Other reflections from the group included the following:

- It was appreciated that the conversation was not “all or nothing” but focused on how to make trail experiences open and safe for everyone.
- The Bend community can be a leader in the discussion about e-bike use on public lands and will be looked at as a case study by other communities. This is a great opportunity to lead by example by keeping all trail experiences in mind.
- It was helpful to learn more about accessibility interests and how current motorized vehicle rules on the DNF relate to mobility devices.
- It will be challenging to convey nuanced information about class 1 e-bike use on public lands to the public throughout this process.
- It was suggested that clarifying that the focus of this conversation is on “pedal assist” class 1 e-bikes would be helpful for the public.
- The USFS admired how engaged participants were during the first Roundtable meeting and looks forward to hearing from the conservation interest perspective at this meeting. *(The individual representing conservation interests was absent at Roundtable #1 meeting)*

Conservation and Wildlife Considerations

During the discussion, Andrew Walch, ODFW shared some general conservation and wildlife considerations regarding recreation and e-bike use. The group discussed the points raised by Andrew, which included the following:

- All recreation has been shown to affect wildlife and the conservation concern is allowing e-bikes could mean an increase in overall recreation use.
- E-bikes create the potential for riders to travel further and faster, increasing the total volume of use and impact on wildlife.
- Seasonal exposure to recreation is a concern for wildlife, especially in the winter.
- Ungulates are more impacted by recreation activities that are louder and faster. E-bikes are not louder than traditional bicycles but there is a conservation concern that e-bikes may be faster and therefore have a greater impact than traditional bikes.

Scenario Discussion: Class 1 E-bikes on Some, None, or All Non-motorized Trails

Participants discussed what strengths/opportunities and challenges/weaknesses may exist if none, some, or all non-motorized trails are opened to e-bikes on the DNF. Participants were encouraged to consider the question from a range of perspectives, such as user experience, habitat and conservation

needs, public communications, and implementation details in their responses. Triangle facilitated the discussion and took notes.

A common theme that arose across all hypothetical scenarios was the importance of user behavior, social norms and etiquette to safe user experiences on the trails. Identifying who the burden of etiquette communication and enforcement falls upon will be critical to consider.

No Trails Open to Class 1 E-bikes (Status Quo)	
Strengths/Opportunities	Weaknesses/Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued social/user tension (status quo is not working locally) • Public communication • Enforcement challenges and increased user conflict • Etiquette challenges • Potential to decrease tourism/visitation in the Bend area

All Trails Open to Class 1 E-bike Use	
Strengths/Opportunities	Weaknesses/Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear policy • Possible to learn from new rider experience and translate education to new e-bikers • More equitable access to the trail network • Rental/tourism opportunity⁴ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public communication • E-bikes may not be appropriate for the most difficult trails (too technical for the heavy e-bikes) • Crowded trailheads with more users • Potential increase in the use of the trails and resulting wildlife disturbance and natural resource impacts • Trails with limited visibility pose risks to equestrians and horses; a blanket allowance on all trails could increase user conflict • Potential for increased crowding at trailheads • Concern about increased volume and increased number of “bad actors” • Increase etiquette challenges and awareness, learning, expectations of different users

⁴ It was noted that allowing class-1 pedal assist e-bike access on some or all Deschutes National Forest non-motorized trails may increase usership at already crowded trailheads and trails. This could deter existing riders/visitors and may not result in a net “benefit” to the tourism economy.

Some Trails Open To Class 1 E-bikes

Strengths/Opportunities	Weaknesses/Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider one-way (e.g. uphill only) trails • Defined boundaries will help with enforcement and help users understand where they can use e-bikes • Possible to reduce “social policing” and resulting conflict through defined trails network and boundaries • A “pilot program” could help explore the “social” question • Would provide equitable access to trails for more user groups • Possible to provide something for everyone on the trail system • Use trail “counters” to understand user volume • Potentially more users opting to ride loops or bike to trailheads versus taking shuttles or driving to trailheads • Opportunity for local access and tourism⁵ • Opportunities offer a demo fleet of e-bikes for visitors • Consider only allowing class 1 e-bikes on blue and green trails • Consider creating a “green”/easy loop for beginners • Be intentional about how impacts of e-bikes on trails are discussed • Open up a small section of trails to e-bikes first • E-bike access as a “equalizer” for riders of different abilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public communication • May be hard to predict how use volumes may increase • May be hard to monitor changes in use volume due to allowing e-bikes • Potential increase in user-to-user conflict • Increase users unfamiliar with how to control a bike on dirt (potentially leading to injury) • Trail etiquette for all users • Potential increase in the use of the trails and resulting wildlife disturbance and natural resource impacts

⁵ It was noted that allowing class-1 pedal assist e-bike access on some or all Deschutes National Forest non-motorized trails may increase usership at already crowded trailheads and trails. This could deter existing riders/visitors and may not result in a net “benefit” to the tourism economy.

Pilot Study Discussion

Roundtable participants explored implications of any pilot project that could take place in the future, which might help inform e-bike policy on the DNF. Although there are currently no plans for a pilot project to study possible impacts of pedal assist, class 1 e-bikes on the DNF, this initial conversation covered the following topics:

- Considerations of a potential pilot project:
 - What might a pilot project look like?
 - What questions would a pilot project seek to answer?
 - What trail qualities make an ideal trail for a pilot project?
 - How should a pilot project be addressed?
 - What is the “spirit”/intent of the pilot project?
 - Possible to use the Tahoe NEPA analysis on e-bike impacts to inform a Deschutes NF pilot project?
 - What would a pilot project measure? Trail damage, environmental impact, user conflict, speed, other topics?
 - How would the target information be measured and by who?
 - How do changes in user patterns affect wildlife/trails, etc.?
- Potential outcomes of a pilot project may include:
 - Could seek to answer questions about whether e-mountain bikes and analogue mountain bikes are substantially similar or if they are different.
 - Pilot could test the public’s ability to self-regulate and distinguish between classes.
- Potential complications/challenges of a pilot project may include:
 - How would a pilot project allowance of e-bikes be rolled back if needed? Are there examples?
 - Who would monitor which e-bike class? Will people self-regulate?

It was suggested that a pilot could seek to answer social, environmental, physical, and economic questions regarding e-bike impacts. Some participants suggested that a pilot study could focus primarily on answering social and cultural questions, while others suggested it should also consider environmental impacts specific to the DNF. Andrew Walch, ODFW, indicated a pilot project would have limited utility for understanding impacts of e-bikes on wildlife and it is better to consider existing studies regarding the effects of recreation on wildlife.

Planning for Upcoming Community Town Halls

The facilitation team and DTC reviewed a draft agenda for the community town halls scheduled to take place on July 27 and August 3.

Interest was expressed in offering e-bike demonstrations for town hall participants and possibly the wider public. Thomas and DTC noted that the size of the upcoming town hall may not be conducive for this kind of activity but that it would be a great chance for anyone to promote a follow-up event or go-to-you meeting at a later date.

The facilitation team requested that Roundtable participants identify 8-10 individuals from their respective user groups that they would like to attend either the July 27 in-person town hall, or a virtual

town hall on August 3. A “toolkit” including the following items for Roundtable leads to share with their chosen 8-10 people will be sent as a follow-up email:

- Draft invitation transmittal email
- Town Hall event flyer
- DTC E-Bike FAQ document

After initial targeted invites are made by roundtable members, DTC will open the registration to the wider public. Both town halls will be capped at 80 participants.

Wrap Up and Next Steps

The Facilitation team thanked Roundtable leads for their participation and reviewed action items. The meeting was adjourned.